

STATUS REPORT ON CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS AFTER RTE ACT 2009



**NATIONAL COALITION
FOR EDUCATION**

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Preface

On behalf of National Coalition for Education (NCE) India we would like to take this opportunity to express our heartiest gratitudes to Ms Vimala Ramchandran and Mr. A.N. Reddy for preparing this short report on closure of schools in India. Firstly, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to our partners and contributors who have given important information in making this report informative and meaningful.

‘The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 (RTE) has already completed its six years and many of the norms and standards, as enumerated, therein have been missed grossly. We hardly see any tangible data on adherence of norms and standards by private schools. Thus the enforcement of RTE rules in the states in terms of school norms and standards is still in dubious condition.

The mushrooming of unrecognized and unregulated private schools is a big threat to poor and marginalized children who have the justiciable right to education.

Though, this study doesn't have empirical inferences due to unavailability of clear data on school closure. However the DISE report (Flash Statistics) published by NUEPA shows the reduced number of schools instead of opening new one. Unfortunately the school mapping exercise as enshrined in the RTE Act has not been done in most of the states by local authorities. Hence the actual number of requirement of schools is ambiguous.

We hope this report will be used by our partners, well wishers, researchers and academicians for further highlights of the magnitude of the problem of schools closure.

We finally express our sincere thanks to all who made valuable contribution in this report.

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ABBREVIATIONS

RTE	Right to Education
NCE	National Coalition for Education
DISE	District Information System for Education
RTI	Right to Information
APF	Azim PremJi Foundation
AIPTF	All India Primary Teachers Federation
NISA -	National Independent School Alliance
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
SCR	Student Classroom Ratio
NUEPA	National University of Educational Planning and Administration
DEO	District Education Officer
BEO	Block Education Officer
UP	Uttar Pradesh
NCERT	National Council Of Educational Research And Training
PSK	Prathmik Shiksha Kosh
ISI	State Implementation Society

Background of the study

In the last two years the media reported that private schools have been forced to close down because of non-compliance with the RTE Act of 2009 (APF, 2016). There have also been reports of government schools being closed down due to low enrolment of students. In recent meetings of teacher's associations and unions, there has been a lot of discussion on whether schools have actually been closed down across the country. The National Independent School Alliance (NISA) gathered data from their own sources and informed that 19,414 private schools were shut down by the state governments (NISA, 2015¹) – and they organised meeting and demonstrations drawing the attention of the government and also the media to closure of private schools². In the last three years there have been a significant number of news reports highlighting the issue of school closure – both government schools and private schools. Among the private schools the focus has been on low-cost private schools that cater to the poor. Some state – particularly Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have been the focus of media attention. Some activists have argued that the government is yielding space to private players and look upon this phenomenon as yet another step towards privatisation³.

Questioning the veracity of data on closed schools, a recent report brought out by the Azim Premji Foundation (January 2016) said that these claims are not based on actual fact. The report also said “It could not be ascertained whether non-compliance of RTE alone was the reason for these school closures. Also, whether the schools that were closed, were ‘recognized private’ or ‘unrecognized private’ schools is not stated. ‘Unrecognized private’ schools in any case do not have the license to function... Also if we were to go by the argument that RTE leads to closure of private schools, then we should have seen an overall decrease in the number of private schools after 2013. However as per 2013-14 & 2014-15 DISE data there is an increase in number of private recognized schools (overall 4%) in 25 out of 35 States/UTs. The number decreases in only 5 States & 1 UT. On unrecognized schools, there is a decrease of 18% (4565) in the 2013-14 number as compared to 2012-13. This could mean that either they are now recognized after effective improvement or were found to deserve shutdown...” (APF, 2016)

NCE commissioned this paper to get a clearer picture of the situation on the ground. We tried to gather both secondary information from DISE / UDISE, compiled the information from state governments through Right to Information (RTI) application and visited a selected number of districts in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to get first hand information from the district officials along with the reasons for closure / merger as the case may be.

Norms and standards prescribed by RTE Act of 2009

The RTE Act of 2009 has specified norms and standards relating to Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTRs), buildings and infrastructure, school-working days, teacher-working hours. The act *“also provides for rational deployment of teachers by ensuring that the specified pupil teacher ratio is maintained for each school, rather than just as an average for the State or District or Block, thus ensuring that there is no urban-rural imbalance in teacher postings. It also provides for prohibition of deployment of teachers for non-educational work, other than decennial census, elections to local authority, state legislatures and parliament, and disaster relief. It provides for appointment*

Source: <http://nisaindia.org/data-school-closures-18-march-2014-due-rte-act>

1. See NISA website for details: <http://www.nisaindia.org/event/lucknow-budget-private-schools-advocacy-meeting>

2. Statements by Ambarish Rai of the RTE forum - <http://www.governancenow.com/news/regular-story/rte-5-years-1-lakh-schools-shut-down-india-national-forum->

of appropriately trained teachers, i.e. teachers with the requisite entry and academic qualifications. It prohibits (a) physical punishment and mental harassment; (b) screening procedures for admission of children; (c) capitation fee; (d) private tuition by teachers and (e) running of schools without recognition...” (MHRD, GOI 2015⁴),

There are basically three categories of norms and standards: (a) overall school norms like pupil-teacher ratios, norms for recognition of private schools, building requirement, working days / working hours requirements, library, teaching-learning equipment, playground and other equipments, etc.; (b) teacher characteristics like qualifications required and method of recruitment of teachers; and (c) rights of children to be admitted to school, prohibition of corporal punishment, harassment and discrimination; age-appropriate admission followed by special training / classes to enable children to catch up and no-detention up to class 8⁵.

The norms prescribed by RTE Act are applicable to both government and private schools alike – with one important difference. However it is believed that these norms and standards are effectively applicable to private schools only and that they are not adhered to by government schools in many parts of the country – especially those relating to school-wise pupil teacher ratios, basic infrastructure requirements including libraries and toilets. DISE and UDISE data compiled bears out this fact with the persistence of schools with high pupil-teacher ratios in many areas of the country and also schools which do not have adequate infrastructure. For example, percentage of schools with PTR more than 30 at primary stage continues to be very high. In Uttar Pradesh more than 50 per cent of schools and in Rajasthan about one-fifth of schools still have PTR more than 30. Similarly percentage of single teacher schools continues to be around 10 in both states.

Table 1.1: Percentage schools that do not conform to RTE norms

Item	Rajasthan			Uttar Pradesh		
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
% of schools with PTR more than 30 at primary stage	31.1	20.7	18.3	57.3	57.0	55.7
% of schools with PTR more than 35 at upper primary stage	15.9	7.6	3.7	43.3	33.5	33.9
% of schools with SCR more than 30 at primary stage	24.3	20.6	17.7	20.3	43.9	41.9
% of schools with SCR more than 35 at upper primary stage	20.3	15.9	14.6	29.7	43.3	30.2
% of schools without drinking water facility	94.9	96.3	96.5	98.0	98.2	98.5
% of schools with Boys Toilet	77.6	98.1	96.4	95.5	99.0	98.0
% of schools with Girls Toilet	97.8	96.1	96.6	98.0	97.1	97.6
% of single teacher schools	14.0	11.8	18.1	8.8	8.3	9.4
% of schools with single classroom			3.3			0.5
% of schools having ramp	57.9	65.2	48.2	90.6	90.4	36.6
% of schools having boundary wall	79.9	82.5	79.4	65.4	68.0	69.0
% of schools having library	57.1	59.7	...	73.9	72.5	...

Source: SRC, DISE

⁴Source: <http://mhrd.gov.in/rte> (accessed on 21 March 2016)

⁵The norms and standards are available in ssa.nic.in/rte/4Model..Rules.pdf and the CCS report <http://ccs.in/sites/default/files/research/research-effectiveness-of-school-input-norms.pdf>

Proportion of schools with necessary infrastructure facilities on par with RTE norms continues to be low. District wise compiled by DISE reveal that very few schools meet 10 RTE parameters chosen examine in 2012-13 across all districts where primary data are collected for the study.

Table 1.2 Percentage of Schools by Compliance to RTE Indicators* in 2012-13

Compliance to all 10 RTE Parameters												Total No. of Schools
District	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	
Rajasthan												
Alwar	14.7	23.2	24.0	18.6	11.2	5.8	2.3	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	5594
Bhilwara	6.4	17.0	22.7	21.6	16.6	10.3	4.5	0.8	0.2	0.0	0.0	4477
Sikar	16.4	30.2	28.9	16.1	6.1	1.6	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4479
Jodhpur	7.4	19.1	24.8	22.3	13.7	7.9	3.5	1.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	5911
Rajsamand	9.7	20.6	25.9	21.9	13.8	6.8	1.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	2326
Jaipur	15.3	28.3	26.2	16.7	8.3	3.7	1.3	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	8788
Compliance to all 10 RTE Parameters												Total No. of Schools
District	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	
Uttar Pradesh												
Mujaffarnagar	14.7	25.6	31.0	21.7	5.9	0.9	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	3944
Moradabad	8.1	21.8	28.8	23.9	12.7	3.9	0.7	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	3535
Firozabad	6.4	18.6	24.5	29.6	15.7	4.9	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2971
Mau	7.1	23.5	32.7	30.8	5.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2792
Basti	3.1	15.2	36.7	34.7	9.9	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2952
Janupur	1.6	7.8	18.1	26.4	27.9	15.6	2.4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	5361

* 10 Indicators chosen. These include Drinking Water, Ramp, Boundary Wall, Playground, Library, Girls' Toilet, Boys' Toilet and Teacher-Classroom Ratio ≥ 1 , SCR ≤ 30 (Primary) and SCR ≤ 35 (Upper Primary), PTR ≤ 30 (Primary) and PTR ≤ 35 (Upper Primary)

Source : DISE

The big unanswered question before the education community is whether the RTE norms and standards are contributing to improvement in the overall conditions of our schools? The annual RTE implementation report brought out by different agencies tell us that we still have a long way to go before all our children – especially the differently able, migrant, urban poor, street and working children – are able to realise their right to education⁶.

⁶Available status reports include:

NUEPA 2014: http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/EFA-Review-Report-final.pdf

NCERT 2013: (<http://www.ncert.nic.in/departments/nie/dee/publication/pdf/StatusreportRTE2013.pdf>)

IIM-A and CSF 2016: (<http://www.dise.in/Downloads/State-of-the-Nation-Section-12-1-c-CSF-March-2015.pdf>),

RTE Forum: (http://www.rteforumindia.org/sites/default/files/Year%204%20Stocktaing%20Report_RTE%20Forum.pdf),

Annual reports of MHRD, GOI: (http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/AR2013-14.pdf and http://ssa.nic.in/rte-1/RTE%20Final%20book_11-04-12%20-%20Low%20resolution.pdf)

The question that this report seeks to explore is whether the RTE Act, or the prescribed norms and standards are contributing to school closure or the merger of schools. We also seek to explore the reasons for school closure – in the private sector and the government managed schools.

What do we know about school closure?

The National Coalition for Education submitted RTI applications to all the state governments – asking for information on the numbers of schools closed or merged in academic years 2013-14 and 2014-15, with reasons for closure as well as the break-up by school management (government, private aided and private unaided). It is interesting to note that the NCE received response from 9 state governments. The information received was uneven – as some state collated the information, while in others block or district education officers furnished the information (Table 1).

It is indeed interesting that the RTI application did not yield data and most of the states reported that no schools were closed down because of RTE. Table 1, is based on the RTI application is self-evident. A total of 8602 schools were closed – primarily due to zero enrolment and 15,082 schools merged because of low enrolment. Out of these, majority of closed schools were government primary / elementary schools. The number of private or private aided schools is negligible. Understandably, the RTI application did not yield information on private unrecognised schools.

Given the uneven response received from the state governments, we decided to check what information DISE or UDISE could provide us on closed or zero enrolment schools. The information that DISE / UDISE yielded turned out to be extremely interesting. There are three categories of such schools – as evident in Table 2:

- a. Schools without enrolment but with teachers
- b. Schools without teachers but with students enrolled
- c. Schools without student enrolment or teachers

It is indeed ironical that even after the RTE Act there are still schools without teachers and there are schools without students. And despite public knowledge and data, this issue is yet to receive attention it merits. In a recent 9-state study on teacher working conditions (NUEPA, 2015) it emerged that many states find it very difficult to “rationalise” teacher deployment and ensure that there are adequate numbers of teachers in every single school. As a result there are schools that have very low pupil-teacher ratios and those that have high pupil teacher ratios. This essentially means that it is not easy to ensure adequate numbers of teachers in remote / rural schools or those schools that are situated in locations that are “difficult”.

In order to get a better understanding, we then compiled the data on closed schools (all schools, government and private) from DISE / UDISE (Table 3). Interestingly, the data available from different sources does not match. According to DISE 94,407 schools were closed between 2012 and 2015. Significantly, 76.3 per cent of these schools are primary and upper primary (now known as elementary schools). A state-wise break-up of the above data is also revealing (Table 4). Rajasthan accounts for 23.60 per cent of closed schools followed by Uttar Pradesh accounting for 18.55 per cent and Andhra Pradesh accounting for 14.64 per cent of closed schools. Therefore it is not surprising that the media had highlighted the issue in these states.

We then disaggregated the data by government, private unaided and private aided schools (Table 3). The picture that emerges is interesting. While the number of government schools and private unaided schools is comparable – 34,055 government and 30,171 private unaided (between 2012 and 2015, All India), the numbers of private aided schools closed is small (1477). Equally significant is the state-wise differences. In Rajasthan the numbers of government schools closed is high (15,930) as compared to private unaided (4559). However, in Uttar Pradesh more private unaided schools (7488) were closed since 2012 as compared to government schools (5802). Similarly in Madhya Pradesh while only 553 government schools were shut down, 4722 private unaided schools were closed during the same period. It is, therefore, not surprising that the print media in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan have highlighted school closure. In UP most stories in the media pertain to private schools while in Rajasthan they pertain to government schools.

A closer look at Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh

We then tried to look at two states closely – Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. We collated district-wise data from DISE and also spoke to officials in select districts. The information that we got and the reasons for closer and merger did not yield any significant insight or information on school closure.

Rajasthan:

Using UDISE information we extracted data on schools closed in academic years 2012-13 to 2014-15 (Table 5). The data reveals that 278 primary schools were shut down during academic year 2012-13, out of which 219 were run by local bodies (Panchayat). The districts of Bikaner (31), Jodhpur (29), Rajsamand (32) and Sikar (33) accounted for majority of primary schools closed or merged. In the same year 56 primary with upper primary schools were closed down, out of which 53 were managed by the Department of Education. The number of government / local bodies school closed increases to 563 in 2013-14 with 234 schools managed by local bodies and 325 by the Department of Education. Furthermore, the number of primary with upper primary schools closed during 2013-14 is 69, out of which 67 are managed by the department of education. The numbers increase significantly in 2014-15 – with 13,216 school closed or merged out of which 12,042 are managed by local bodies and 1165 by the Department of Education. The numbers of primary with upper primary schools closed also increased to 1736 out of which 1732 are managed by the department of education. Among the districts that reported more than 500 of primary school closure were Alwar (625), Bharatpur (504), Bhilwara (596), Jaipur (715), Jhunjhunu (512), Sikar (682) and Udaipur 541. Discussions with officials in Rajasthan revealed that data on unrecognised private schools is not collected and that no recognised private schools have not shut down.

The NCE team visited six districts – Alwar, Bhilwara, Sikar, Jodhpur, Rajsamand and Jaipur. They interviewed the district education officials to gather first-hand information on the numbers of schools closed / merged in 2012-13 and 2014-15. What was striking is that the data from the two sources – DISE and the DEO's office do not tally. The reason given for school closer is low enrolment. In Jaipur district, the officials informed that 235 schools were not “closed” but “merged”. We discussed this information with a few teacher union leaders in Jaipur and they also confirmed that low enrolment is an important reason for school merger and closure. They explained that in the late 1990s and early 2000s a large number of Rajiv Gandhi Pathshalas were opened – many of them in villages that already had primary schools. During a field based study on teacher motivation done in 2005 this issue was highlighted: *“Enrolment for classes 1 to 5 went up by 19.69% between 1986-93 and 55.09% between 1992-2003. This spectacular improvement may be a product of enrolment*

campaigns organised over the last 15 years as also an indicator of changing social values and aspirations of parents. It is noteworthy that the rise has been particularly steep in rural areas and among girls. The disturbing trend, however, is that the rate of increase in the number of schools and teachers has not kept pace with the increase in enrolment. This has led to overcrowded schools and classes, higher student-teacher ratios, increased burden on the teacher and worsening working conditions, escalating dropout rates at the primary level, especially among rural girls. Given that almost 40% of the children enrolled in class 1 drop out before they reach class 5, the pressure on upper primary schools and secondary schools is far less. Ironically, the rate of increase in the number of schools at the upper-primary (127% between 1993-2003) and higher secondary (142.11% between 1993-2003) far exceed the rate of increase of schools at the primary level – which at -1.19%, is in the negative. Administrators argue that while the number of formal primary schools has decreased, the number of Rajiv Gandhi Pathashalas (RGP) has gone up substantially. The number of RGPs stands at 21,306 in 2004 – employing an equal number of parateachers. It is noteworthy that all RGPs are single-teacher schools being run from single rooms.” (Vimala Ramachandran et al, 2005) During the course of the study teachers argued that location of these schools were based on many considerations. After 2004 the RGPs were regularised as government primary schools – leading to multiple schools in the same village / locality. It is this anomaly that was corrected – argue senior teachers of Rajasthan.

Rajiv Gandhi Pathashala, 2003

District / State	2001-02		2002-03		2003-04	
	Enrolment	Centres	Enrolment	Centres	Enrolment	Centres
Tonk District	14,346	428	20,732	332	17,616	342
Rajasthan	7,61,651	21,339	12,13,574	20,559	13,34,435	21,306

Source: Government of Rajasthan, December 2004

Table 1.3: School closure with reasons, Rajasthan, 2012 to 2015

District	No. of Schools	No. of children effected	No. of Teachers effected	Average enrolment per school	Average no. of teachers per school	Stated reasons for closing of schools by officials of DEO/BEO
Rajasthan (2012-13 to 2014-15)						
Alwar	36	4955	173	138	4.8	Low enrolment
Bhilwara	597	28665	922	48	1.5	Low enrolment
Sikar	738	14247	2397	19	3.2	Low enrolment
Jodhpur	26	988	156	38	6.0	Low enrolment
Ransamand	267	82430	1993	309	7.5	Low enrolment
Jaipur	980	no information	no information	739 schools closed due to low enrollment, 235 schools merged with other schools in the same area		

Source: NCE Field survey, March 2016

As evident in Table 1.3 above, it is also noteworthy that average enrolment in affected schools ranges between 19 in Sikar to 309 in Rajsamand. In Alwar, it is 136. This casts doubts on 'low enrolment' as the reason for closure of schools at least in these districts. This of course does not preclude availability of another school within the norms of access as reason for closure of schools.

The information obtained by the NCE team in March 2016 cannot be compared with the information or analysis given in the Azim Premji Foundation (2016), because the latter primarily deals with private schools. What is emerging from the Rajasthan DISE and field data is that many government schools (those managed by department of education, tribal or social welfare department and local bodies) have been closed or merged – and the reason cited by officials and teachers is low enrolment of students. There is no data to substantiate the oft-made argument that RTE Act has led to closure of private schools in Rajasthan.

Uttar Pradesh:

UP has also been on the limelight in the media for school closure. A range of prominent researchers and columnists argue that RTE has led to the closure of private schools. Recent articles by research Dr. Geeta Gandhi Kingdon⁸, Luis Miranda⁹, Jasleen Kaur¹⁰ and several more argue that the RTE Act has led to closure of private schools. As argued in the opening paragraphs of this paper, the public perception is that the government is closing private schools. A closer look at the data from UP reveals that equal number of government and private schools have shut down. We do not know if they were shut down because they violated RTE. The fact remains that closure of private schools is an issue and a lot more field-based work is required to unravel the reasons for closure.

Table 1.4: Year-wise schools closed in Uttar Pradesh, DISE

	Government			Private Unaided			Private aided			All Schools
	Primary	Primary with Upper Primary	Upper Primary only	Primary	Primary with Upper Primary	Upper Primary only	Primary	Primary with Upper Primary	Upper Primary only	
2012-13	2872	12	1074	1813	382	580	116	17	86	6952
2013-14	846	8	397	2150	205	475	82	22	79	4264
2014-15	327	4	262	1279	190	414	38	19	42	2575
Total	4045	24	1733	5242	777	1469	236	58	207	13791

Source: DISE compiled by A N Reddy

The number of government school that closed down gradually falls from 2012-13 to 2014-14. However, when it comes to private unaided schools, the maximum closure has been in 2013-14. Table 1.4 above gives a picture of schools closed down by management. Table 6 in the annexure gives a district-wise break-up of government schools that were closed in the three years.

⁸<http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/toi-edit-page/schooling-without-learning-how-the-rte-act-destroys-private-schools-and-destroys-standards-in-public-schools/>

⁹<http://forbesindia.com/blog/accidental-investor/impact-of-the-rte-shutdown-of-schools/>

¹⁰<http://www.governancenow.com/news/regular-story/rte-5-years-1-lakh-schools-shut-down-india-national-forum->

Data collected from the six districts reveal that many government schools have indeed been closed down or merged or removed from the school database. Field visits to interview district officials to six districts reveal interesting reasons – merging of schools functioning in the same campus and cleaning up of duplicate entries in data. Low enrolment or no enrolment **was not cited** as a reason in UP. Lets take the case of Moradabad – the officials report that 2031 schools were reported “closed”; however officials say that the children are studying in the same school! While this statement may be counter-intuitive the officials explain that the closed schools were functioning in a newly created district. In some cases (27 schools) – those functioning in the same campus were merged. In the other districts the officials explain than no schools were closed – all they did was remove duplicate entries.

Again, like in Rajasthan – the data that we got from the district officials do not match with the data that is available through DISE. It would not be possible to hazard a guess on reasons for the mismatch.

Table 1.5 School closure with reasons, 2013-14 to 2014-15 Uttar Pradesh

District	No. of Schools	No. of children effected	No. of Teachers effected	Average enrolment per school	Average no. of teachers per school	Stated reasons for closing of schools by officials of DEO/BEO
Mujaffarnagar	0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Moradabad (2011-12 to 2015-16)	2031	children studying in the same school				2004 schools were reported to be closed in 2012-13. A new district was created and all these schools were functioning in the new district. Merging of schools (27) functioning in the same campus was stated for closing of schools in 2012-13
Firozabad	0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Mau	561	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	Physically no school was closed. Duplicate entries were created by error and removed subsequently from data base
Basti	296	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	Physically no school was closed. Duplicate entries were created by error and removed subsequently from data base
Janupur	20	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	Merging and removal of duplicate entries

The field data collected by NCE confirms the trend we saw in DISE data. While in Rajasthan the district officials report that 0 private schools are closed, this was not the case in Uttar Pradesh. Visit to six districts reveals that 357 private schools are closed down - 11 in Muzaffarnagar, 136 in Moradabad and 212 in

Firozbad. The reasons given by the officials include non-compliance to RTE or closed by management because school not successful or not making profits. This data is inadequate to make any generic statement about Uttar Pradesh. Perhaps an in-depth qualitative study would be essential to ascertain why schools are closing down and if non-compliance to RTE norms is an important reason.

What can we infer from the above trends?

Like almost all issues to do with schools – there is no doubt that there are significant state-wise differences. The question before civil society is to understand the logic behind merger or closure of government and private (recognised) schools. Neither did the RTI application or available research evidence can give any satisfactory explanation. While it may be difficult to conclusively argue that closed have or have not been closed because of the RTE Act of 2009, it is also extremely difficult to explain the reasons for merger of government schools. Among the various explanations available in the public domain range from falling enrolment in government schools, presence of more than one school in a 1 km radius, the conversion of alternative schools or EGS schools into regular primary schools and steady march of students from government to private schools. While demographic transition and falling child population could be an important issue in some states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Goa etc.; that is not a significant factor in the populous states of northern and central India – especially Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

Another issue that needs to be explored is the reported phenomenon of double enrolment – where a child is enrolled in more than one school. It could be a government school and a private school – both recognised and unrecognised. For at least twenty five years micro qualitative studies have had a problem reconciling official data and the information that is generated by small-scale surveys. This has remained a contentious issue because governments ask for hard statistics to confirm this phenomenon. However, officials of MHRD admit “parents enroll children in government schools to avail benefits such as the mid-day meal and free books and uniform, but the children attend classes in private schools” (India Today, 4th February 2011). While it would be difficult to say anything conclusive about this phenomenon at this stage, some experts argue that since the enactment of RTE and close monitoring of the mid-day-meal the number of “bogus or fake enrolment or double enrolment” has come down – leading to declining enrolment in recognised schools. Official action against fake enrolment in several states has been reported in the press – most recently in Maharashtra, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh¹¹.

This brief report based on secondary data would need to be complemented by in-depth qualitative studies that can examine the issue closely. There would no doubt be differences between states and also within states. Equally, it would also be very important to take on board the voices of those who argue that this issue has been highlighted in the media without sufficient hard evidence (APF, 2016).

¹¹Sources in the media: <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/article363483.ece?service=print> ; http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Repository/getFiles.asp?Style=OliveXLib:LowLevelEntityToPrint_TOINew&Type=text/html&Locale=english-skin-custom&Path=TOIPU/2012/05/08&ID=Ar00604 ; <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/primary-school-enrolments-fall-by-more-than-a-million/1/128640.html> and <http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report-teachers-students-must-get-aadhar-cards-by-june-2013-1746194>

Recommendations

The first and most important recommendation is to conduct more in-depth research. We do not have adequate and reliable data. The picture that emerges from DISE data is at variance with what the officials reported in the districts – either through the RTI mechanism or in interviews. More importantly, we do not have adequate information on private schools that seek recognition, those that were close down because of failure to get recognition. It may not be possible to either validate or refute the data that was put out by National Independent Schools Alliance in March 2014. Most newspaper articles were based on the data that was put out by NISA. If NCE or any other organisation would like to get a realistic picture, it may be necessary to select sample districts and do a thorough survey of all schools – government, private recognised and private unrecognised. Interviews with people who are aware of schools that were closed would need to be interviewed in order to obtain reliable information on the impact of RTE on closure of schools.

The second recommendation has to do with ensuring that government schools comply with the RTE norms. As discussed in this paper – there are many schools across this vast country that have very high pupil-teacher ratios. There are also many single and two teacher schools that are multi-grade. An respected forum like NCE could talk to government about ensuring all government schools adhere to RTE norms with respect to school facilities, pupil-teacher ratios, number of working days, school timings and hours of instruction and most importantly library and other educational facilities.

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ANNEXURE OF TABLES

Table 1: Status of closed / merged schools as per RTI application filed by NCE, 2015

Sl. No.	State	RTI application submitted	Response received	Remarks	Schools closed	Schools Merged
1.	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	RTI application submitted on 20th August 2015.	Response received on 26th September 2015.	Four schools closed due to zero enrolment.	4	-
2.	Himachal Pradesh	37 RTI applications were submitted on 5th August 2015.	Responses from different blocks received from 1st September to 9th October 2015.	A total of 161 schools were reported closed, out of which 133 were government schools. The information is uneven and several blocks did not respond. Less or no enrolment were cited as reasons for closure.	161	-
3	Madhya Pradesh	RTI application submitted on 20th July 2015.	Response received between 11th September and 29th October from 7 districts.	Total of 5408 schools were closed / merged, out of which 1680 were government schools - and in majority of the cases no reasons were given.	5,408	-
4	Mizoram	One RTI application was submitted on 5th August 2015.	The state government sent the response on 1st September 2015.	6 government primary / upper primary schools closed, due to shortage of student enrolment.	6	-
5	Punjab	RTI application submitted on 20th July.	Response received from three districts between 17th September and 19th October 2015.	25 Schools merged and 7 private schools issued notices.	-	25
6	Rajasthan	No information on number of RTI applications submitted. However the date mentioned is 20th July 2015.	Response received from the state government on 9th September 2015.	The state government responded that no schools were closed, however 15,057 schools were merged and that the district-wise data is available in DISE.	-	15,057
7	Sikkim	RTI application was submitted on 5th August 2015.	The state government sent the response on 28th August 2015.	Total of 943 schools were closed in the preceding 2 academic years, 489 of them were government schools and rest private and monastic. No reason given.	943	-
8	Telangana	RTI application submitted on 20th July 2015.	All 20 districts responded, the information was collated by the state government and submitted on 10th August 2015.	Total of 1926 schools were closed, majority of them primary and upper primary in 2013-14 and 2014-15 run by the government. 1060 Government schools were closed and the remaining were aided and unaided. No reasons were given in the response of the government.	1,926	-

9	Uttarakhand	RTI applications on 20th July 2015.	20 responses were received from Block Education Officers / District Education officers - between 20th August and 29th September 2015.	Total of 154 schools were closed, majority of them Government Primary Schools. The main reason given for closure of 145 government schools was zero enrollment / no children. The remaining were private schools - the reasons given were either no enrollment or not adhering to RTE norms.	154	-
					8,602	15,082

Source: RTI Data collected by NCE, 2015-16

Table 2: Data on schools (government and private) with no students, no teachers or both (2012 to 2015)

Category of School	Schools without enrolment but with teachers			Schools without teachers but with enrolment			Schools without enrolment and teachers		
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Primary Only	5,743	3,867	4,618	9,533	6,194	5,777	1,281	1,427	1,234
Primary with Upper Primary	788	587	745	1,438	743	2,093	171	96	107
Primary with Upper Primary and Secondary and Hr. Secondary	179	188	195	456	145	92	125	62	24
Upper Primary Only	1,382	589	419	3,431	3,095	3,036	384	436	166
Upper Primary with Secondary and Hr. Secondary	382	207	118	351	90	56	82	19	5
Primary with Upper Primary and Secondary	54	97	125	364	129	120	53	21	9
Upper Primary with Secondary	85	184	165	649	167	131	131	24	17
Secondary Only	1,556	1,751	1,716	2,264	670	460	406	103	62
Secondary with Hr. Secondary	105	5	-	18	9	-	616	552	14
Higher Secondary Only	1,851	2,280	2,259	1,580	601	244	1,535	256	55
No Response	744	1,075	1,099	1,549	469	343	1,364	973	366
Total	12,869	10,830	11,459	21,633	12,312	12,352	6,148	3,969	2,059

Source: DISE compiled by Dr. A N Reddy, 2016

Table 3: Number of schools closed by category and management and state between 2012-13 to 2014-15

Number of schools between 2012-13 to 2014-15															
	Govt.			Private Unaided			Private aided			All Mangement					
	Primary only	Primary with Upper Primary	Upper Primary only	Primary only	Primary with Upper Primary	Upper Primary only	Primary only	Primary with Upper Primary	Upper Primary only	Primary only	Primary with Upper Primary	Upper Primary only	Upper Primary only		
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	9	-	-	45	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54	1	-
Andhra Pradesh	3,713	64	20	1,130	1,228	1	232	26	-	-	-	-	5,075	1,318	21
Arunachal Pradesh	683	7	1	14	6	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	698	13	1
Assam	26	-	4	72	58	4	-	-	-	-	20	-	98	58	28
Bihar	374	29	-	24	29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	398	58	-
Chandigarh	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
Chhattisgarh	114	4	60	456	294	75	14	-	-	-	4	-	584	298	139
Delhi	4	1	1	28	20	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	32	21	2
Goa	74	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	75	1	1
Gujarat	138	223	7	203	590	32	6	12	-	-	8	-	347	825	47
Haryana	543	1	3	212	164	6	3	1	-	-	-	-	758	166	9
Himachal Pradesh	164	-	11	190	63	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	354	63	12
Jammu And Kashmir	242	31	1	251	272	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	494	303	1
Jharkhand	192	47	1	22	33	6	3	2	-	-	-	-	217	82	7
Karnataka	996	99	5	587	369	18	35	79	-	-	11	-	1,618	547	34
Kerala	10	-	-	21	8	1	4	-	-	-	1	-	35	8	2
Lakshadweep	8	-	-	21	11	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	35	11	-
Madhya Pradesh	428	1	124	1,915	2,560	247	104	25	-	-	17	-	2,447	2,586	388
Maharashtra	568	240	5	596	199	6	101	75	-	-	-	-	1,265	514	11
Manipur	17	2	-	22	41	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	40	43	4
Meghalaya	9	-	5	94	6	11	6	-	-	-	-	-	109	6	16

Mizoram	10	-	3	22	18	25	-	-	1	32	18	29
Nagaland	211	14	306	33	34	1	-	-	-	244	48	307
Odisha	141	22	9	80	39	33	12	1	16	233	62	58
Punjab	776	-	80	499	411	-	15	2	-	1,290	413	80
Rajasthan	14,056	1,860	14	2,003	2,553	3	4	4	-	16,063	4,417	17
Sikkim	13	-	-	29	8	-	2	-	-	44	8	-
Telangana	158	1	2	203	166	-	6	2	-	367	169	2
Uttar Pradesh	4,045	24	1,733	5,242	777	1,469	236	58	207	9,523	859	3,409
Uttaranchal	232	-	27	500	79	110	3	-	9	735	79	146
West Bengal	845	3	157	3,117	326	120	92	6	3	4,054	335	280
TOTAL	28,801	2,674	2,580	17,633	10,364	2,174	887	293	297	47,321	13,331	5,051

Table 4: Closed (government and private) Schools 2012-13 to 2014-15

Category of School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Total 2012-13 to 2013-15	% of school by category in total closed schools
Primary Only	18,416	14,679	23,431	56,526	59.87
Primary with Upper Primary	4,955	4,580	6,030	15,565	16.49
Primary with Upper Primary and Secondary and Hr. Secondary	1,552	656	498	2,706	2.87
Upper Primary Only	2,235	1,449	1,599	5,283	5.60
Upper Primary with Secondary and Hr. Secondary	1,001	347	195	1,543	1.63
Primary with Upper Primary and Secondary	337	675	623	1,635	1.73
Upper Primary with Secondary	748	673	465	1,886	2.00
Secondary Only	465	1,480	796	2,741	2.90
Secondary with Hr. Secondary	1,161	789	326	2,276	2.41
Higher Secondary Only	781	560	557	1,898	2.01
No Response	993	1,078	277	2,348	2.49
Total	32,644	26,966	34,797	94,407	100.00

Source: DISE various years, compiled by Dr. A. N. Reddy, 2016

Table 5: Closed (Non-functional schools) Schools 2012-13 to 2013-14

State	School Category											% of schools closed in total schools by state	
	Primary Only	Primary with Upper Primary	Primary with Upper Primary and Secondary Hr. Sec-ondary	Upper Primary Only	Upper Primary with Sec-ondary and Hr. Sec-ondary	Primary with Upper Primary and Sec-ondary	Upper Primary with Sec-ondary	Second-ary Only	Second-ary with Hr. Sec-ondary	Higher Sec-ondary Only	No Response		Total
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	55	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	57	0.06
Andhra Pradesh	8610	1746	190	22	495	159	1020	8	347	146	1075	13818	14.64
Arunachal Pradesh	826	13	1	1	0	2	2	0	0	4	0	849	0.90
Assam	299	59	128	57	24	32	4	19	0	2	4	628	0.67
Bihar	409	76	13	0	5	5	1	14	1	30	1	555	0.59
Chandigarh	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0.00
Chhattisgarh	778	308	96	145	37	34	39	1099	30	180	18	2764	2.93
Daman & Diu	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.00
Delhi	32	21	4	2	3	3	1	0	2	0	0	68	0.07
Goa	78	1	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	82	0.09
Gujarat	357	846	270	49	23	29	27	176	165	164	168	2,274	2.41
Haryana	876	223	125	10	9	108	12	3	8	-	-	1,374	1.46
Himachal Pradesh	355	63	27	13	4	27	5	-	3	1	1	499	0.53
Jammu and Kashmir	506	305	50	1	-	65	-	1	11	4	-	943	1.00
Jharkhand	457	253	40	8	21	33	27	43	16	16	41	955	1.01
Karnataka	1,653	569	97	36	10	66	21	686	41	83	286	3,548	3.76
Kerala	159	35	3	5	1	2	1	1	6	-	3	216	0.23
Lakshadweep	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.00
Madhya Pradesh	2,720	2,670	181	409	16	92	12	71	241	119	-	6,531	6.92

Maharashtra	1,592	583	148	20	64	61	95	214	104	53	109	3,043	3.22
Manipur	74	55	5	5	1	13	4	4	1	1	5	168	0.18
Meghalaya	110	7	-	17	2	1	3	51	-	1	6	198	0.21
Mizoram	37	21	2	34	-	-	1	31	33	-	16	175	0.19
Nagaland	244	48	3	307	-	5	4	23	1	-	6	641	0.68
Odisha	1,169	123	62	85	3	51	224	11	13	-	3	1,744	1.85
Punjab	2,689	1,410	318	82	21	406	11	-	8	6	3	4,954	5.25
Rajasthan	16,344	4,443	522	17	104	359	69	6	400	16	2	22,282	23.60
Sikkim	69	17	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	87	0.09
Tamil Nadu	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.00
Telangana Only one year)	502	183	2	2	2	12	166	5	29	1	149	1,053	1.12
Uttar Pradesh	9,823	941	280	3,453	574	42	110	269	567	1,448	1	17,508	18.55
Uttaranchal	963	86	24	159	36	3	11	4	15	1	1	1,303	1.38
West Bengal	4,736	458	114	343	88	24	15	1	305	-	-	6,084	6.44
All India	56,526	15,565	2,706	5,283	1,543	1,635	1,886	2,741	2,348	2,276	1,898	94,407	100.00

Source: DISE various years, compiled by Dr. A. N. Reddy, 2016

Table 6: Number of closed primary and Upper primary schools in Rajasthan 2014-15

District	Primary only				Primary with Upper primary			
	Department of Education	Tr and SW Department	Local Bodies	Total	Department of Education	Tr & SW Department	Local Bodies	Total
Ajmer	54	-	322	376	99	-	0	99
Alwar	47	-	625	672	101	-	1	102
Banswara	34	4	413	451	57	0	0	57
Baran	11	3	244	258	27	0	0	27
Barmer	7	-	388	395	35	-	0	35
Bharatpur	50	-	504	554	73	-	0	73
Bhilwara	46	-	596	642	95	-	0	95

STATUS REPORT ON CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS AFTER RTE ACT 2009

Bikaner	46	—	348	394	48	—	0	48
Bundi	11	—	223	234	33	—	0	33
Chittaurgarh	17	—	327	344	57	—	0	57
Churu	68	—	313	381	48	—	0	48
Dausa	30	—	333	363	25	—	0	25
Dhaulpur	25	—	283	308	25	—	0	25
Dungarpur	9	2	215	226	26	0	0	26
Ganganagar	59	—	287	346	18	—	0	18
Hanumangarh	13	—	244	257	44	—	0	44
Jaipur	151	—	715	866	77	—	0	77
Jaisalmer	6	—	177	183	7	—	0	7
Jalor	16	—	279	295	50	—	0	50
Jhalawar	17	—	248	265	72	—	0	72
Jhunjhunu	42	—	512	554	66	—	1	67
Jodhpur	76	—	395	471	74	—	0	74
Karauli	27	—	381	408	35	—	0	35
Kota	37	—	159	196	50	—	0	50
Nagaur	48	—	581	629	89	—	0	89
Pali	38	—	412	450	98	—	0	98
Pratapgarh	10	—	141	151	18	—	0	18
Rajsamand	10	—	213	223	39	—	0	39
Sawai Madhopur	26	—	412	438	40	—	0	40
Sikar	54	—	682	736	90	—	2	92
Sirohi	16	—	177	193	44	—	0	44
Tonk	32	—	352	384	21	—	0	21
Udaipur	32	—	541	573	51	—	0	51
TOTAL	1165	9	12042	13216	1732	0	4	1736

Table 7: Number of closed government primary and Upper primary schools in Uttar Pradesh 2013-14

District	Primary only			Upper Primary Only		
	Department of Education	Tr and SW Department	Local Bodies	Department of Education	Tr & SW Department	Local Bodies
Agra	4	—	—	5	—	—
Aligarh	2	—	—	1	—	—
Allahabad	8	—	—	5	—	—
Ambedkar Nagar	1	—	—	—	—	—
Auraiya	4	—	—	2	—	—
Azamgarh	4	12	0	1	2	1
Baghpat	1	—	—	—	—	—
Ballia	7	—	—	2	—	—
Barabanki	0	2	—	5	0	—
Bareilly	3	1	1	1	0	2
Bhadoi	2	—	—	—	—	—
Bijnor	58	—	—	29	—	—
Bulandshahr	2	—	—	7	—	—
Chandauli	1	—	—	3	—	—
Chitrakoot	4	—	1	1	—	0
Deoria	3	2	—	3	0	—
Etah	130	—	—	6	—	—
Faizabad	3	—	—	—	—	—
Farrukhabad	15	—	1	10	—	0
Fatehpur	2	1	2	5	0	0
Gautam Buddha Nagar	2	—	—	1	—	—
Ghaziabad	10	—	6	3	—	0
Ghazipur	13	2	—	3	0	—
Hapur (Panchsheel Nagar)	18	—	—	5	—	—

Hardoi	6	1	1	10	8	0	0	0	8
Hathras	56	2	5	63	16	1	1	2	19
Jalaun	—	1	0	1	—	0	0	1	1
Jaunpur	12	3	—	15	7	0	0	—	7
Kannauj	6	—	—	6	1	—	—	—	1
Kanpur Dehat	1	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	1
Kanpur Nagar	12	—	1	13	6	—	—	1	7
Kanshiram Nagar	7	—	—	7	19	—	—	—	19
Lucknow	2	—	—	2	1	—	—	—	1
Maharajganj	12	—	—	13	16	—	—	—	16
Mahoba	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
Mainpuri	9	—	—	9	3	—	—	—	3
Mathura	23	—	—	23	7	—	—	—	7
Mau	132	10	—	142	42	0	0	—	42
Meerut	9	—	1	10	1	—	—	0	1
Moradabad	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Muzaffarnagar	59	—	8	67	28	—	—	2	30
Pilibhit	—	—	3	3	—	—	—	—	—
Pratapgarh	5	—	—	5	7	—	—	—	7
Rae Bareli	9	—	0	9	5	—	—	1	6
Sant Kabir Nagar	45	—	—	45	23	—	—	—	23
Shahjahanpur	2	—	—	2	2	—	—	—	2
Shamli (Prabudh Nagar)	42	—	7	49	20	—	—	2	22
Sitapur	12	1	—	13	9	0	0	—	9
Sonbhadra	8	—	1	9	1	—	—	0	1
Unnao	—	—	2	2	—	—	—	—	—
Total	767	38	41	849	382	3	12	397	397

ABOUT NATIONAL COALITION FOR EDUCATION (NCE)

Vision

All children up to 18 years of age are in schools and are getting quality education driven by human values to become empowered and productive citizen.

Mission

NCE strives to advocate the right to education, a justiciable right for every child on the basis of equal opportunity, gender equity, in a child friendly environment.

Genesis

The creation of national coalition for education in India was highly influenced by the global political atmosphere on right to education. Beginning in 1990 with the Jomtien Conference and the adoption of the World Declaration on Education for All there has been a continued push to get every child into school. However, there was very little progress being made and ten years later, in 2000, the World Education Forum was held in Dakar, Senegal, and an agreement was made on the objective of having EFA by 2015. Six targets were set up stating that quality education should be available for free for everyone. One of the biggest players present at the forum was the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) that was created from the efforts of INGO's Action Aid, Oxfam GB, and Education International that wanted to set up a global coordinated funding initiative. The GCE promised to mobilize and create public pressure on governments to follow up on their promises to provide free high quality education for all people, especially for children and women (GCE 2009).

The NCE was formed as a product of the prolonged struggle of like-minded organizations, groups and individuals on the issues of education in India. The idea of establishing a national coalition in India initially began in 1996 when several of the current members began working together on the issue of EFA.

Composition

Since its official inception in 2002, the NCE has brought together a varied group of member organizations, uniting teachers unions, non-governmental organizations, and other social movements. At this time, the NCE has seven member organizations:

- All India Primary Teachers Federation (AIPTF), a union of more than 3 million primary teachers,
- All India Federation of Teachers Organization (AFTO), a union of 1.2 million teachers,
- All India Secondary Teachers Federation (AISTF), a union of 0.85 million teachers,
- All India Association for Christian Higher Education (AIACHE), an association of 300 college principals,
- World Vision India, a foundation working for child rights, education and development,
- Parliamentary Forum for ensuring right to Education, a group of existing and newly elected Parliamentarians.
- People's Campaign for Common School System (PCCSS) an organisation working for common school system.
- Besides these partners NCE has around 150 NGOs, individuals, networks and fellow travellers from community as well as at national level.

The NCE initiative extends to many regions of India, covering northern, central, north-eastern, eastern and southern regions. While the NCE is the official representative of the GCE in India and is part of other regional organizations such as Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE), the majority of its activities are focused internally. Its international presence plays a secondary role for its members and for the most part is only a representative one intended to bring recognition and acknowledgement of India's challenges and values to the global education community.



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